

# PUBLIC HEALTH NOTES



## HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS

### *What is human papillomavirus?*

There are more than 100 types of human papillomavirus (HPV). About 60 types of HPV cause common skin warts of the hands and feet. The remaining types are of more concern. When some of these HPV types infect the genital area, they can cause cervical cancer, pre-cancers and genital warts.

### *Why be concerned?*

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection in the United States. The virus can cause health problems in both sexes. There is no way to know which person who gets HPV will go on to develop cancer or other health problems.

In the United States this virus will infect an estimated 75% to 80% of males and females in their lifetime. Each year in the United States, about 11,000 women get cervical cancer. About one million people in the United States have genital warts at any point in time.

### *How is this virus spread?*

HPV is spread by intimate contact with an infected person. HPV infection can have no signs or symptoms so it is possible to spread the virus unknowingly to another person. There is no cure for HPV infection.

### *Is there a way to protect against HPV?*

The best time to protect against HPV is before exposure to the virus. Vaccination can protect against four types of HPV. These four types cause the most cases of disease. The vaccine is given in three doses over a six-month time period. The vaccine is safe and effective with the most common side effect being soreness at the injection site.

**GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS**

- ♀ The HPV vaccine is recommended for girls when they are 11 or 12 years of age. Girls who miss getting HPV at the recommended age can still get it through 26 years of age. Girls are at a higher risk of developing disease from HPV.

- ♀ Two vaccines (Cervarix and Gardasil) are available to protect against most cervical cancers. One of these vaccines (Gardasil) also protects against genital warts.

**BOYS BOYS BOYS BOYS BOYS BOYS**

- ♂ One vaccine (Gardasil) may be given to boys and young men 11 through 26 years of age to protect against genital warts.

### *Talk with your healthcare provider*

It is recommended that adolescents have routine health checkups. At this visit, it is easy to receive the first dose of HPV vaccine along with other recommended adolescent vaccines. If your doctor does not offer HPV or your insurance does not cover this vaccine, visit a Waukesha County Public Health Immunization clinic. Walk-in immunization clinics held in communities throughout Waukesha County. For more information, visit us at [www.waukeshacounty.gov/immunizations](http://www.waukeshacounty.gov/immunizations) or call (262)-896-8430.